

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 MCT-01 SY-05 HA-05

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /100 W

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P 091045Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0915

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 0655

DEPARTMENT PASS HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, PBOR, PINS, ASEC, DJ, ET, FR

SUBJECT: FRANCE AND ETHIOPIA

REF: ADDIS ABABA 2042 AND DJIBOUTI 0650

SUMMARY - THE RECENT CONVERSATION BETWEEN FRENCH AMBASSADOR BARBIER AND DERG CHAIRMAN MENGISTU WAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO THIS POST BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THE APPARENT DEVELOPING RAP-PROCHEMENT BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND FRANCE IS A COMFORTING SIGN FOR POTENTIAL STABILITY IN THIS PART OF THE HORN. CURRENT EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND FRANCE OBVIOUSLY ARE PART OF A BROADER PLAN TO REINFORCE DJIBOUTI STABILITY. THIS MAY ALSO HAVE A BEARING ON FRENCH MEDIUM AND LONG RANGE INTENTIONS IN DJIBOUTI. END SUMMARY.

1. CHARGE TOOK OPPORTUNITY DURING DISCUSSION KIDNAPPING FRENCH ENGINEER (DJIBOUTI REFTEL) TO RAISE SOME OF THE MATTERS BROUGHT UP BY FRENCH CHARGE IN HIS PORTRAYAL OF THE MENGISTU-BARBIER MEETING (ADDIS REFTEL). FRENCH AMBASSADOR BASTOUIL HAD ONLY SEEN AFP DISPATCH ON MENGISTU STATEMENTS AT BARBIER DEPARTURE
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AND HAD NOT YET

BECEIVED REPORT ON MEETING (THE FRENCH STILL

USE POUCHES FOR SOME POLITICAL REPORTS). HE INDICATED THAT

RECENT MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING TO MENGISTU

DEALT SPECIFICALLY WITH THE SITUATION OF DJIBOUTI AND THAT

MENGISTU MEETING WITH BARBIER WAS PROBABLE RESULT OF THAT

COMMUNICATION.

2. BASTOUIL ALSO PROVIDED INFO TO EFFECT THAT AHMED DINI IS NOW IN PARIS AND THAT PRIME MINISTER ABDALLAH KAMIL HAD "SEVERAL" MEETINGS WITH AHMED DINI DURING RECENT VISIT TO PARIS WITH PRESIDENT HASSAN GOULED. THE DJIBOUTI PRESIDENT REPORTEDLY SAID THAT HE WOULD BE WILLING TO TALK TO DINI ANYTIME THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER REQUESTED AN APPOINTMENT. THE FRENCH APPARENTLY WERE INTERESTED IN ARRANGING A DISCREET MEAL BETWEEN GOULED AND AHMED DINI BUT THE DJIBOUTI CHIEF OF STATE DECLINED. THE LOCAL EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR TOLD CHARGE LAST NIGHT THAT DINI WAS TO RETURN TO DJIBOUTI ON THE TENTH OF THIS MONTH. HOWEVER, AMBASSADOR BASTOUIL REPORTS THAT DINI IS SCHEDULED TO GO TO CAIRO AND JIDDA IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS AND IS UNLIKELY TO BE RETURNING TO DJIBOUTI SO SOON. BASTOUIL INDICATES THAT THE FRENCH HAVE RECEIVED ASSURANCES THAT DINI WILL NOT RPT NOT BE ARRESTED IF HE RETURNS TO DJIBOUTI.

3. THE FRENCH ARE WORKING DILIGENTLY TO PROVIDE A SECURE NICHE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA FOR DJIBOUTI. RESTORATION OF GOOD RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA IS OBVIOUSLY A SIGNIFICANT PART OF ANY SUCH POLICY. IT IS NATURAL THAT THE FRENCH DO SO, GIVEN THE CONSIDERABLE CHANGES IN BALANCE OF POWER IN THIS REGION. AT THE SAME TIME, CERTAIN LONG-TERM INTERESTED OBSERVERS IN DJIBOUTI, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE NON-OFFICIAL FRENCH AND OTHER EXPATRIATE POPULATION IN DJIBOUTI BELIEVE THEY SEE INCREASING SIGNS OF FRENCH PREPARATIONS TO LEAVE DJIBOUTI. CERTAIN MILITARY INSTALLATIONS
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OUTSIDE DJIBOUTI ARE BEING CLOSED DOWN AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT IS NOT BEING REPLACED. CONCURRENTLY, A NUMBER OF FRENCH MERCHANTS ARE SELLING OUT OR CLOSING DOWN. BECAUSE THE MILITARY ACCORDS BETWEEN DJIBOUTI AND FRANCE ARE ONLY FIRM THROUGH 1980, MANY PEOPLE HERE BELIEVE THAT BY THAT TIME THE FRENCH WILL BE READY TO WITHDRAW. THE POST IS PREPARING A SEPARATE MESSAGE ON SOME OF THE WITHDRAWAL SCENARIOS WHICH HAVE BEEN PRESENTED, FOR LATER DISCUSSION WITH THE DEPARTMENT.
CLARKE

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED TO HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE.

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